December Bronze Bidding Challenge

This set of problems comes from the Performance Event 3.

Problem 1 Teams: EW Vul, Dealer North

♠KT8732 ♥K865 ♦K3 ♣T	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	-	1NT	Pass	Pass
	?			

1NT = 12-14
(You have agreed that a 2♣ overcall of 1NT shows both Majors)

This is not a very strong hand, and we are vulnerable. Perhaps surprisingly, Tim is the only panellist to vote for complete passivity:

McKay: Pass. I like to bid and I am in protective position but I only have 9 points and my spade suit is fairly empty.

All true, but the other panellists all take some action, preferring not to wait for the inevitable minor suit lead.

Hamilton: 2♠. I don't fancy showing both majors as that's likely to end in a 4-3 heart fit having to ruff clubs in our hand, and if we pass out 1NT partner is on opening lead and will lead the wrong suit.

Sime: 2♠. With my hand likely to be forced, I would rather play in a 6/1 fit than a 4/2 fit, or even a 4/3 fit. With a stronger hand I would bid 2♣ and pull 2♥ to 2♠ to show 6/4.

On his own. Steve chooses the conventional toy:

Male: 2♣. Do I show a 6-card suit or both majors. ? I don't like Pass and the spades are poor-ish.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♠	**5**	**10**	**17**
2♣	**1**	**7**	**19**
Pass	**1**	**6**	**5**
2♥	**0**	**1**	**2**
2♦	**0**	**1**	**1**

Partner's hand is not ideal: ♠9 ♥QT ♦Q962 ♣Q97532. Even 2♠ is too high, and you definitely do not want to play in hearts. But opponents can't make much either, so it may be worth pushing them around a bit.

Problem 2 Teams: None Vul, Dealer East

♠T5 ♥AQ6 ♦7643 ♣KJ32	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	-	-	1♥	Pass
	?			

In SBU standard a 1NT response shows 6-9 HCP, which makes this hand slightly too strong. You might decide to downgrade and bid 1NT anyway, but that is not recommended with two suits completely unstopped.

Russell speaks for the majority:

Frame: 2♣: Showing 10+HCP initially but intending to show secondary Heart support, at the minimum level, on the next round.

Sime: 2♣: With my points in my suits this hand is enough to bid 2♣ then 3♥ over 2♦/2♥.

Yes, if partner does rebid 2♢ you would need to jump to 3♥ to show positive 3-card support: 2 would be simple preference, a bid often made with doubleton support in a minimum 2-over-one. When you do bid 3♥ next time might partner expect more playing strength?
Jim considers an alternative cunning plan, but settles for the popular choice;

Tudor: 2♣. Tempting to say 2♦ to discourage the lead should we end up playing in NT, but if partner has a club fit and that's the contract for us, then I will lose the post-mortem!

On his own, but making a lot of sense:

SANDERS: 3♥. Despite only 3-card support I prefer a limit raise. Partner will have 5 hearts most of the time but when they don't will be strong balanced (15-19) and can show this hand by rebidding 3NT.

For most a single raise may occasionally be made with 3-card support, but the jump raise promises 4 cards. But when you have nothing but unpalatable alternatives you have to decide which is the least bad, and supporting partner is rarely the worst thing to do.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♣	6	10	34
3♥	1	8	1
1NT	0	7	2
2♥	0	5	5
2NT	0	3	2

Partner has the dreaded 4=4=4=1: ♠AKJ4 ♥JT93 ♦AJ85 ♣5. You can make 3NT from your side with some careful play, but 1NT is an easier proposition.

Problem 3 Teams EW Vul, Dealer East

♠KT6 ♥KJ86 ♦J ♣AK863	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	-	-	Pass	Pass
	1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
	?			

We are clearly going to raise hearts here: the question is how high? The panel is agreed that 2♥ Is too wet.

FRAME: 3♥ . My perfect bid here would be two and a half Hearts but, as I can't find this one in the bidding box, I'd prefer a slight overbid to an underbid with my 6-loser hand!

SANDERS: 3♥: An invitational raise. the hand has good 4 card support, a useful side suit in clubs along with a singleton so too strong for a minimum raise of 2♥ but not quite strong enough for a game raise to 4♡!

TUDOR: 4♥. If partner has as little as the ♥A and ♠Q then we want to be in Game. A 4♦ Splinter might work out best on a good day, but will partner push on hoping for more high card points in my hand?

4♦ does seem a bit over the top with only one Ace, but Iain has a suggestion:

SIME. 3♥. The expert bid is 3♦, a mini-splinter, not Game Forcing. That would help partner evaluate whether to sign off, bid game or make a slam try. I don't like the marginal 4♢ splinter which leaves no space.

MCKAY: 3♦. A splinter (showing shortage) agreeing Hearts. If that's not available I will bid 3♥.

Some partners might assume that 3♦ is natural here, but it should not be. 2♦ is a reverse, a rebid in a higher-ranking suit that compels partner to give preference at the 3-level. As such it is natural and forcing, so there is no need to jump to 3♦. An unnecessary jump is, by definition, a splinter bid.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
3♥	5	10	32
3♦	1	9	1
4♥	1	7	3
4♦	0	5	4
2♥	0	2	4

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Partner has ♠32 ♥AT97 ♦K95 ♣J942. It's a so-so game, but one you want to be in when Vulnerable.

Problem 4 Teams EW Vul, Dealer East

♠Q742 ♥J ♦QT64 ♣AJ86	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	-	-	1♥	Pass
	1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
	?			

The panel takes a pessimistic view here:

TUDOR: Pass When considering bidding NT I normally deduct a point or two from my hand with a singleton in partner's suit – the Jack is obviously better than a small singleton, but bidding on looks too optimistic.

SANDERS: Pass; Partner is limited to fourteen points and the hand is misfitting so game is not realistic. Note: East is virtually guaranteed to have a 6-card suit here so no need to think 2NT will play any better.

MALE: . Pass. The call we don't use enough. Stretching on 4441 hands never works for me.

FRAME: Pass: I was very tempted into trying 2NT with 10HCP but, in the end, opted for a conservative pass as partner is likely to have only 7 cards outside his 6-card Heart suit so the success of any NT contract would probably depend on a 3-3 Heart break and we could easily lose 5/6 tricks in any of the other suits.

On his own again, our only optimist:

MCKAY: 2NT showing 10-12 points and inviting game. A bit pushy but the vulnerable game is very valuable at Teams.

The rewards for making a vulnerable game are greater than when you are not vulnerable, which is why many expert players stretch more when vulnerable. 3NT is particularly tempting, since it is the contract most often made when it might be beaten.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
PASS	6	10	13
2NT	1	8	29
3♣	0	2	1
3NT	0	1	1

Partner has ♠AT6 ♥QT9642 ♦A7 ♣K5 just the tickets required to make 3NT a reasonable spot. Only 1 pair in the PE3 reached game, even though it is vulnerable.

Competitors Top Scores

An easier set to end the year: congratulations to all who took part, and particularly to those who achieved a perfect 40

3* Master	Will Iles	Stewartry	37
2* Master	Roy Heanes	New Melville	38
1* Master	Robin Macpherson	New Melville	40
	Jane Smithson	Berwick	37
	David Edelman	Maccabi	35
	Alasdair Adam	Direct	34
	Pam Warner	New Melville	33
Master	Brian Rattray	Oban	40
	Ken Brown	Pentland	38
	Paul Kerr	Troon	38
	Andy McKinnel	Linlithgow	37
	Alan Kirk	Bearsden Academy	35
	Robert Taylor	Linlithgow	34
	Ken Tait	Marmion	32
	Graham Vincent	Linlithgow	30
District Master	May Armour	Kyle	37
	Stephen Carr	Ness	37
	Dawn & Peter Beckett	New Melville	36
	John Smithson	Berwick	35
Local Master	John Baraclough	Ness	38
	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	30
Club Master	Sandra Mair	Carlton	40
	Fiona McCourt	Bearsden Academy	35
	Angela Horsfall	Carlton	35
	Debbie Bland	Bearsden Academy	34
	Linton Horsfall	Carlton	32
	Brian Allan	Dundee	30
Novice	Janet Ironside	New Melville	40
	Annie Brown	New Melville	38
	Wilma Currie	Kilmacolm	38
	Fiona Davis	New Melville	35
	Robert MacTier	Bearsden Academy	35
	Evelyn Watson	Stepping-Stone	35
	Janet Hamblin	New Melville	34
	James Tweddle	Berwick	31

The Best of 2023

Congratulations and thanks to all the regular competitors.

My workload has been eased considerably by Troy, who volunteered to help and has taken responsibility for scoring, which he does far more efficiently than I ever could. It does mean that I have less personal contact with you all, but if you have any queries or complaints I have more time to answer them…

These are the leading scores for those who entered at least 8 times, averaging their 8 best scores. The top player for each Master Point Rank is highlighted.

			Best 8
Pam Warner	1* Master	New Melville	294
Graham Vincent	Master	Linlithgow	293
Will Iles	3*Master	Stewartry	291
Ken Brown	Master	Pentland	290
Dawn & Peter Beckett	Local Master	New Melville	289
David Hartley	Master	St Andrew	286
John Smithson	District Master	Berwick	286
May Armour	District Master	Kyle	285
Robin MacPherson	1* Master	New Melville	284
Paul Kerr	Master	Troon	282
Margaret Mainland	Local Master	Orkney	279
Jane Smithson	1* Master	Berwick	279
Ken Tait	Master	Marmion	274
Sandra Mair	Club Master	Carlton	272
Roy Heanes	2* Master	New Melville	268
Debbie Bland	Club Master	Bearsden Acad	268
Brian Rattray	Master	Oban	265
Alasdair Adam	1* Master	Stirling	264
Fiona McCourt	Club Master	Bearsden Acad	263
Linton Horsfall	Club Master	Carlton	259
Ian Lowson	Local Master	New Melville	259
David Olive	Master	Caledonian	258
Keith Smith	Local Master	New Melville	258
Larry Watson	District Master	Buchanan	251
Allison Clayton/Lesley Cochrane	Local Master	Aberdeen	250
Alan Kirk	Master	Bearsden Acad	250
Wilma Currie	Novice	Kilmacolm	245
John Ramsay	District Master	Carlton	242
Brian Allan	Club Master	Dundee	241
Evelyn Watson	Novice	SteppingStone	254
Angela Horsfall	Club Master	Carlton	235
Helen Adamson	Club Master	Kirkcaldy	232